

Staff/Child Ratios and Group Size for Children 36 months and younger

Same Age Groups

<u>Age</u>	<u>Staff/Child Ratio</u>	<u>Maximum Group Size*</u>
0-12 mos. (Infants)	1:3	9
13-24 mos. (Young Toddlers)	1:4	12
25-36 mos. (Older Toddlers**)	1:6	12

*Group size is defined as the number of children assigned to a caregiver or team of caregivers occupying an individual classroom or defined space.

**The definition of older toddlers is children between 25-36 months of age. An exception may be made for those children who have reached 33 months of age; these children may be enrolled in a three- year- old classroom with written parental permission. Ratios and group size for three-year-olds shall apply.

Mixed Age Groups

When there are mixed age groups in the same room, in self-contained space, on the playground, or trips away from the center, the staff/child ratio and group size shall be determined by the age of the youngest child in the group.

Rationale*

According to the National Research Council's report, *Who Cares for America's Children? Child Care Policy for the 1990s*, staff/child ratios and group size are two of the four most important areas to be addressed in national standards.

Low staff/child ratios are most critical for infants and toddlers (1). Infant development and caregiving quality improves when group size and staff/child ratios are smaller (2). Improved verbal interactions are correlated with lower ratios (3).

Children benefit from social interactions with peers. Group size and ratio of staff to children are limited to allow for one to one interaction, intimate knowledge of individual children, and consistent caregiving. Larger groups are generally associated with less positive interactions and developmental outcomes.

Facilities enrolling children with special needs shall determine, by an individual assessment of each child's needs, whether the facility requires a lower staff/child ratio.

* Adapted from *Caring For Our Children—National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs, Second Edition*, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, 2002.